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Encountering Resistance: Creative Responses to Sustainability Agendas.

Abstract

The quest for a more ethical and sustainable future can be a difficult and even daunting challenge to engage with. As Artists, Designer-Makers, Craftspeople and Educators engaged with this very contemporary challenge, I suspect that many of the conference delegates will have encountered resistance to this aspect of their work; resistance amongst consumers, producers, audiences, students and, let's be honest, even ourselves on some level. Denial, Disempowerment and Disinterest are all commonly experienced reactions to sustainability agendas.

Yet, I would argue, finding positive, empowering and motivational solutions to these often deeply held positions in both individuals and the society they create, are some of the key challenges we face in attempting to aid the transition to a more sustainable society.

About 5 years ago now, I was trialling some sustainability workshop material that I had devised (see www.thesite.eu) with a group of PGCE teaching students. I was just in the process of asking them what 'sustainability' meant to them, how they would define the term, when one of the students piped up and said 'I hate the environment!' She had said it in a rather tongue in cheek and jovial manner so I don't think my response was unduly facetious when I said 'what, even the air you breath and the water you drink?' 'Oh, you know what I mean' she said; 'nature, sustainability, that kind of stuff….I'm a city girl!' Whilst I knew she was not really being serious, she was nevertheless making quite a point, and letting me know that she had reasons for resisting the learning. What she was suggesting, in no uncertain terms, was that her 'self-identity' was the reason why she did not wish to engage with sustainability. It was a deflection; she was declaring an intention to disengage from the process because it did not seem relevant to her idea of herself. I found her statement fascinating. Perhaps, beneath the stated reason of identity, there were also deeper and more complex psychological reasons why this student chose not to identify with sustainability.

Over the last 18 years I have been actively involved with environmental and sustainability issues in wide range of ways, including teaching. I have heard many persuasive arguments against engaging with sustainability, some simplified and flippant (but no less poignant) and some well considered and rationally explained in detail

I have always been fascinated and at times slightly perplexed as to why people can sometimes have such strong reactions against sustainability agendas. It almost defies logic… within the umbrella term of sustainability, a whole host of solutions to some of the greatest challenges to ecological, social, economic and personal wellbeing are proposed; what's not to like? Many of us hear the reasons to learn about and move toward sustainability, many of us agree on the value of doing so; yet why is it that, on a global scale, we seem to be getting further from sustainability as a species. According to a recent UN report (UNEP 2011), for instance, based on current growth rates:

'Humanity could devour an estimated 140 billion tons of minerals, ores, fossil fuels and biomass per year (by 2050) – three times its current appetite…far beyond what is sustainable' (pp1)

Whilst much of this consumption could be explained by factors outside of individual peoples control (such as global population increases), many of us, I suspect, feel we could (and would like to) do more to be more 'sustainable' yet do not.

This phenomena, which I believe we are all familiar with, is often known as the value action gap (Blake, J 1999)." or attitude-behaviour gap (Kollmuss, Anja; Julian Agyeman 2002). There is, I have discovered, a wealth of information and theories explaining possible reasons for the resistance to learning (and action) for sustainability; theories about the Value-Action Gap, Identity, the psychology of change, fear, ecospsychology and many more theories besides.

As an arts educator, I do believe it is worth understanding at least some of these theories and how they translate to the actual experience of teaching. The most important thing for me as an educator (and sustainability enthusiast) though, is to find out the best methods for actually engaging students with learning for sustainability, and for 'overcoming' student resistance to learning.

Resistance is Fertile

What I have 'discovered' recently through my own attempts to embed learning for sustainability, is that there is much to be gained, not just from finding solutions to these 'resistances', but also from listening to, acknowledging and learning from these resistances; even, also, in using these resistances as the source of inspiration for creative process. This has helped me greatly in my quest to understand how best to embed sustainability within the curricula I teach.

What I have also realised consequently, is that I was re-discovering and understanding in more depth an approach that is at the heart of what I consider to be good teaching and mentoring practice. Furthermore, I learnt, there is also a terminology for this 'approach' – The Phenomenological Approach, and that it is widely used within Psychotherapy and Counselling, particularly in the Gestalt school of counselling.

Phenomenology in Theory

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement, initiated in 1900-1901 by Edmund Husserl. Phenomenology 'claims, first and foremost, to be a radical way of doing philosophy, a practice rather than a system' (Moran 2008 pp4). This 'practice' or approach can be applied to many fields of human Endeavour, including scientific enquiry, philosophy, psychotherapy and counselling. Phenomenology 'seeks the truth, or source of knowledge by concentrating on immediate experience, shorn of assumptions or pre-suppositions' (Clarkson, 1995).

It is the Gestalt Psychotherapeutic application of Phenomenology however, that I have found to be most useful. There are three 'techniques' or 'attitudes', which are central to this approach (Sills, 1995. pp98 - 105)

Epoche (Bracketing)

Bracketing is the practice of temporarily holding our own assumptions, prejudices, ideas and judgments aside as we listen to the client's own explanation of their understanding or experience.

Description

Whilst holding aside our judgments and assumptions by Bracketing, Description entails encouraging the client to describe rather than interpret or explain their experience. It 'involves staying with the immediately obvious and describing what you see' (Joyce & Sills 2008). In a sense this allows the client to describe their own 'truth' as they experience it rather than what they think they should say to explain themselves. In

exploring the description of 'what is' for the student in more depth, previously overlooked details may yield new realisations.

Horizontalisation

'This is the practice of avoiding hierarchical assumptions as to which described element is more important than any other' (Woldt & Toman, 2005 pp67) both client and therapist can do this as a way of realising important points (or ideas) that may otherwise be overlooked.

In therapeutic practices, these 3 approaches enable the client to speak their own 'truth' as they experience it. This has beneficial effects for the client as they feel listened to without blame, criticism and judgment, and are thus less likely to resist engaging with the process of learning and exploration. It also potentially raises the awareness in both the client and the therapist of realisations that they may otherwise have overlooked in the rush to interpret.

So how is this therapeutic practice relevant to teaching art (or any other subject discipline) and exploring resistance to learning for sustainability? Substitute the words 'client' and 'therapist' for 'student' and 'teacher/mentor' however, and I believe we can begin to see the value. In arts teaching, we are intrinsically engaged with trying to help the student find their own individual creative expression and understanding. Phenomenology consciously values and encourages individual expression and discovery. In terms of learning for sustainability, it can help a student (and tutor) understand any resistance to sustainability; giving them their own inspiration for ways to critically engage with the subject matter. A positive 'side affect' of this process is the positive 'validation' that students can experience for their own point of view – sustainability discourses all to often imply criticism for our lack of sustainability in action and understanding, criticism which can engender resistant reactions in people. Within this process also, perhaps, there is something of an antidote to the feelings of disempowerment so often experienced by people in relation to sustainability agendas as they value and appraise their own awareness. In voicing their own point of view without being criticised, students may also feel less need to defend or cling to their 'resistance' and thus more 'free' to move on from and change their point of view.

In therapeutic terms, a phenomenological approach works with the

'Client's awareness during the therapeutic process, and, as she experiments with and explores aspects of her life that seemed fixed (though in fact they were intrinsically dynamic and mutable), her internal organisation begins to loosen, to become less stuck and more fluid as she begins to rethink old beliefs and new behaviours' (Woldt & Toman, 2005 pp69). This process, I believe, also works well in arts tutoring as we can use it to help the student overcome creative blocks, try new ideas and move on from resistance.

At the same time, in exploring viewpoints on sustainability phenomenologically, both student and tutor may learn something of value in critiquing ideas of sustainability. Assumptions that we may hold now as to what is 'sustainably' correct may well be proven wrong with later knowledge, and viewpoints of resistance may well provide that new knowledge. Gunter Pauli's experience, with the biodegradable cleaning product company Ecover (Pauli, 2011), of unintentionally promoting rainforest deforestation on a massive scale by encouraging the use of biodegradable palm oil fatty acids as a replacement for petrochemical surfactants is an example of this. Whilst this example does not relate directly to arts practice, it does suggest that resistance to, and critique of, accepted sustainability ideas in any field of practice (including the arts) can yield new understanding.

Phenomenology in Practice

So far, I have only really theorised as to why Phenomenology can be useful in arts and sustainability teaching. The point is though, that it is highly useful in actual practice. Let me provide some examples from recent teaching work I have been involved with…

My own teaching practice is predominantly with 16 – 17 year old students, (and a smaller number of mature students of all ages) on the BTEC Extended Diploma in Photography. My colleagues from the course team and I decided this year that we could bring learning for sustainability in to the curricula as a theme for a creative assignment brief. I wrote a brief then, with the theme of 'Life Cycles', which was to be interpreted by the students pretty much however they wished and in whichever presentation format they favoured. As part of the learning material for the assignment we looked at consumerism, waste, pollution, natural life cycles, sustainability and circular economy theories. We also looked at artists who had approached some of those themes in their work for inspiration.

A good number of the students responded really positively to the assignment brief right from the start. Others though, were more resistant to the brief. There were significant similarities amongst the reasons for, and manifestations of, the students resistance which, though differently and individually expressed and experienced, can be seen to typify common resistances to sustainability amongst people generally.

We had some good debates in the early stages of the assignment in which we encouraged the students to voice their opinions. Some students expressed feelings of disempowerment, such as; "what's the point of trying to make a difference personally when so many others aren't?" Other students agreed that 'sustainable alternatives' (organic food and ethical fashion wear for instance) were usually too expensive for them. My colleagues and I tried to encourage the students to use these opinions and feelings as areas for investigation and as inspiration for their artworks. After the debates, we ran a series of tutorials with each student in which we supported the development of their ideas and artworks for the assignment brief.

A familiar aspect of student resistance to learning that many art tutors will have encountered which is not exclusive to sustainability issues is toward being asked to consider the meaning, concepts or contextual influences of their art work; "but I just want to make things…it doesn't mean anything…I wasn't influenced by anything" are all familiar statements to an art tutor. It could be seen as a direct result of the culture of specialization that art colleges encourage with distinct courses such as 'photography'. Students can form fixed ideas, even before joining a course, as to what that subject of study should entail, and the focus for them often is on the product rather than the process. This means that photography students often have a rigid idea of their identity as a photographer, and more specifically, of the type of photographer they are, that puts them off engaging with subject matter such as sustainability.

In keeping with the above points, there were some students who resisted the assignment because they saw it as insufficiently relevant to their interests and preferred field of photography. This was despite my having made the point in introducing the brief that sustainability can relate to absolutely any field of human activity and that they can chose any style or genre in which to explore the themes (be it fashion, landscape, sports, documentary etc). In tutorials, the Phenomenonological technique of Bracketing helped me with some of these students to find out, first, what exactly were their interests and what kind of imagery they would like to produce by asking them to temporarily disregard what they thought was being asked of them with the assignment brief. Having then established what they would engage with positively, we looked for ways that could relate to the life cycles theme. One student, as an example, was encouraged by this process to produce an excellent body of work about her collection of

Nintendo DS game consoles, for which she investigated the environmental impacts of the consoles life cycles.

Another variation of the 'disinterest' resistance was the student who could not think of any ideas for imagery at all to begin with, due to lack of inspiration. Here, the Description 'rule' came in handy. I started by asking the student to describe the kind of colour and tonal palettes he preferred in images. Gradually, we built up an idea of the kind of imagery he liked to produce aesthetically before moving on to subject matter and how it could link to the life cycles theme. This is similar to Description in a therapeutic process, where a counsellor may work with a client who claims to feel nothing, and ask, for instance, "if that nothing had a colour, what colour would it be?" in order to find new ways of helping the client describe their experience. This begins a process of uncovering feelings and thought processes of which they were previously unaware.

Horizontalisation, similarly, helped me find ideas, which some students had been filtering out as they assumed them to be unsuitable for the brief, even though they were more interested in those ideas than the ones they thought they should pursue. One case in point was the student who thought she ought to do something about manufactured goods (which did not inspire her), but was actually much more into macro nature photography. I thought we had been really clear in delivering the brief, that natural life cycles would make suitable subject matter. Yet, as the main subject of discussion the students engaged in was about the environmental impact of manufactured goods, the student has assumed this subject to be more suitable. In the end she thoroughly enjoyed producing some excellent macro flower photography and learning about the life cycles of cut flowers.

As I Bracketed my own assumptions during the tutorial process, I became acutely aware of other reasons why not everyone shared my positive enthusiasm for environmental solutions. Perhaps the PGCE student I quoted at the start of this paper was really on to something…I realized that I have had the privilege of a lifetime of positive and validating experiences of nature and the environment. I am half 'country boy' by upbringing myself. I have fed and nurtured this positive experience throughout my adult life too. Perhaps I was 'destined' by this background to relate well to sustainability. Many of my students, I realised have had very different experiences that might not have led them to make such positive associations with the environment. I realised that I had been searching for other ways to help the students associate with the subject. The beauty of art and creativity in this context, I believe, is that it can potentially create grounds for positive association with sustainability through experience

Resistance in other specialist subject areas

It must be said however, that there were many students who had no resistance to the assignment, and still more that engaged better after some tutoring. But the resistance I did find made me wonder, however, if other tutors ever experienced similar resistances when trying to embed sustainability learning into their curricula. I began by asking my colleagues teaching in other art disciplines and also, later, asked around amongst other sustainability teaching enthusiasts with who I am linked in to via the UK wide 'SHED SHARE' email network (see references).

Some of my investigations focused on Craft and the Applied Arts. I had a theory that the inherent materiality of the mediums encompassed by these subject areas can mean that students/practitioners will be more predisposed to consider the environmental impacts of their art. I put this theory to test and questioned lecturers at PCA working in glass and metalwork. In general, each of the lecturers I asked agreed that this was the case. Richard Wood had found, for instance that the practicality of working with recycled metals encouraged a favourable outlook on sustainability with his metalworking students. According to Ian Hankey and Sue Macgillvray, it would seem that glasswork students were also mostly interested in environmental impacts of their work. It could be

said that the sheer visibility of the energy they consume in the furnaces made high carbon usage an obvious topic. However, not so many of these students agreed on the practicality of low carbon solutions, which led to a certain amount of resistance. It would seem that the process of 'making' in whatever medium chosen, from raw material stage, can help form a positive experience of engaging with sustainability issues.

It does not follow however, that being involved in the process of making will automatically create openness to sustainability awareness amongst students. There are many other influences that may still provoke resistance to ESD, even in design and manufacturing subject. Julia Stean, an FE Fashion & Textiles course leader, for example, told me about student objection to the idea of sustainability in fashion due to the higher costs frequently associated. This echoed opinions I had heard about fashion in my own class discussions. Julia cited the culture of 'fast fashion' as a major influence on this, with the perception of a need to keep up with fashion and have a regular 'turnover' of new clothing. Issues of identity and social influence would seem to be affecting their decisions in this. I also spoke to tutors working outside of arts education who had experienced resistances to learning for sustainability. Arran Stibbe, in referring to his degree level English Language students cited "strong expectations that everything within the degree is the same kind of thing found in an English Language A level, and panic if I go beyond language to consider how language shapes people's perception of important global issues" amongst his students.

I found myself categorising all these resistances into two main types which the above examples typify:

Rational Practical responses, such as the cost and impracticality of sustainable alternatives

Emotive Responses; these often underpin and motivate the above and can be both unconscious and consciously held.

Understanding Resistance

Categorising resistances to sustainability learning might seem somewhat incongruent with my recommendation of the phenomenological approach, but the point of this approach is not to withhold entirely all interpretations of experience and suggestions of solutions, merely to suspend interpretation and explore the student/clients own understanding/experience. Offering up different perspectives, interpretations and ideas can follow and help the student/client decide on ideas that make sense to them.

My interest in learning more about different interpretations of resistance led me into the waters of what I discovered was a vast ocean of published knowledge and academic theories.

Many accounts of resistance to environmental change and learning quote examples of denial, disempowerment, disbelief, dis-association and dis-interest. As well as all starting with a 'd' I would categorise these reactions collectively as symptoms of resistance. These symptoms appeared again and again amongst the theories I was researching, wherein there was much detail and explanation of those symptoms, as well as of other symptoms. But what then, are the causes of those symptoms I wondered? I have listed below the theories I found which seemed most poignant. In a sense I view these in a kind of order, descending through the layers of underlying emotive reactions. It is probably more like a list of ingredients, the varying combination of which may form the recipe for many a cocktail of emotive responses. There is considerable overlap and similarities between the different causes listed here:

Impracticality and Inertia

Often the entire reason for the aforementioned 'value-action gap', if a sustainability option is not practical, even those wishing to act more sustainably will not. Sometimes the very social, industrial and economic systems within which we live our lives prevent sustainable action. This then, understandably is the main focus for many campaigns for environmental reform. We need the means to make the change and the systems to support our change. Often, it is a case of 'I intend to change, but I'm too busy at the moment'; just finding the 'energy' to deal with yet another change when we are already very busy can seem too much. Underneath these very understandable and practical reasons though, there are often more deep-rooted emotional and psychological reasons.

Resisting Coercion

"There's something about the word 'sustainability' – when I hear it, it often makes me want to, I don't know, burn a sofa or something" (Martin Shaw, 2011) Much as I wouldn't advocate the burning of sofas as an appropriate response, I can completely relate to this reactive sentiment! Sometimes the very suggestion that we should do something (even if it helps ourselves and others) can challenge our sense of free will. The environmental movement, in particular, can be seen to hinder itself with, what Rozak calls 'the coercive emotional force of fear and guilt' using 'statistics of impending disaster…scare tactics and guilt trips' (Rozak, Gomez & Kanner 1995). Whilst these shaming tactics do undoubtedly work for some, and despite there being much to be ashamed of environmentally in our behaviour, shame and guilt tactics will often provoke resistance in many people. Talk of 'ecological crisis' is undoubtedly off-putting, as many of us prefer to avoid, even ignore crisis.

Lack of Inspiration

Hopkins (Hopkins, 2009), Winter and Koger (Winter, Koger, 2004) are amongst the many sustainability proponents who have argued the need for positive and inspirational visions to motivate people to make the 'transition' toward more sustainable behaviour; 'painting a picture of the future so enticing that people inevitably feel drawn towards it' (Hopkins, 2009). This suggests that people will resist change without an inspiring vision or reason to aspire towards. As my earlier examples of student resistance suggest, lack of inspiration can be a major stumbling block to action.

Identity Threat

'The reason why many find it hard to get over the threshold of understanding sustainability is because in doing so they might feel they have invalidated who they are and their life's work' (Stibbe, 2010)

Identity Threat, as suggested by the 'I'm a city girl' quote at the start of this paper is a major cause of resistance to sustainability. Identity Process Theory Breakwell, 1986 & Murtagh, Gatersleben, & Uzzell, 2011) uncovers some of the multi-layered aspects of ways in which people can form an identity as well as the many ways in which we can feel identity threat; our sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy, continuity of the self through time and distinctiveness, or a positive sense of uniqueness are all aspects which can trigger a 'coping strategy' of resistance if threatened by change or criticism.

Social Influence

'Although we like to think our attitudes and behaviours are based on rational and logical assessments of facts, a brief glimpse at social psychology reveals the enormously powerful (although usually unconscious) influences that other people have on us' (Winter, Koger, 2004 pp53).

Obviously there are strong links here to the above theories on Identity Threat, as so much of our sense of identity is formed by our need to fit in to social norms. The influence of social grouping however goes beyond affecting our self-identity. Our behaviour and value systems are certainly influence by those around us, as we so often learn from others how to behave.

Value Systems

Intrinsically bound to our sense of identity and influenced both by individual developmental experience and social normalizing, we each hold a value system, which informs much of our daily choices and perceptions. Theories of Ecopsychology (eg. Rozak 1995) and Eco-literacy (Orr, 1992) propose the idea that our value systems, if at odds with the values of sustainability will prompt resistance. Many of these values are unconscious and inherited through our education and the values of the society/culture in which we live. Many argue that changing these values, individually and collectively towards a more 'bio-centric' viewpoint is the key factor in whether we can make the transition to a more sustainable society or not. Value-action gap theories would suggest that it is entirely possible to value sustainability principles, yet still resist acting upon them if any of the other resistance causes listed here are triggered in some way.

Fear of Change

'Change is about uncertainty and we don't like uncertainty – it makes us feel insecure. As a result we cling onto the familiar, it brings us some comfort to stick to what we know, even when the familiar is not necessarily good for us' (Murray 2009)

Interestingly though, change can be seen as a positive and embraced by an individual, depending on just how deeply the change threatens our sense of self or security, and on whether we have a sufficiently enticing vision of what change might bring.

Fear

Besides fear of change, there are a great many fears caused by the above issues and others – perhaps it is the fear of being wrong, or perceived as being wrong (to link it to Identity and Social Influence) that causes resistance. Macy (Macy 1995) identifies the following list of fears as being inhibiting factors that cause resistance to environmental concerns:

Fear of: pain, appearing morbid, appearing stupid, guilt, distress, provoking disaster, appearing unpatriotic, religious doubt, appearing too emotional, feeling powerless. I'm sure we could all add many to the list here. In psychotherapy the phenomenonological approach is often used to uncover the unique 'colour' or nature of an individuals fears. (pp241 – 259)

Grief

Most of the causes listed so far could be seen to be fairly selfish or self-centered reasons for resistance, but what if the resistance was actually provoked by a sense of compassion and the challenge of confronting that compassion? Joanna Macy (Macy 1995) proposes that 'It is the distress we feel in connection with the larger whole of which we are a part…when part of that body is traumatized – in the sufferings of fellow human beings, in the pillage of our planet…we sense that trauma too' (pp241 – 259) This certainly is the view of many ecopsychologists and also fits in with Gestalt psychotherapeutic theories of 'the transpersonal' in which we are all connected. After reading something of the aforementioned Joanna Macy's work on environmental despair, I was moved to look at other psychotherapeutic theories on grief. I found the work of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross particularly interesting as it identified five key stages in the cycle of grief; Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. The theory is that a person needs to move through each of these stages (though not necessarily in that

order) in the process of learning to live with the loss of one we love. What was interesting to me was the similarity of these emotional reactions to some of the resistances we see in people toward environmental and sustainability concerns. It certainly supports (in my mind) Macy's argument that people commonly experience grief in this way. Macy also asserts that a healthy process of acknowledging and working through grief will allow for a sense of re-empowerment; 'unblocking repressed feelings releases energy and clears the mind' this enabling a re-invigorated relationship with environmental action. Perhaps also this process can 'release energy' for creative work in the arts?

Addiction

In contrast, however, to this somewhat benevolent view of resistances born out of grief and compassion, some have argued that addiction (addiction to oil, to technology, to consumerism and other unsustainable lifestyle habits) is a major cause of resistance. In explaining the similarities between substance addiction and addiction to oil in The Transition Handbook (Hopkins 2009, pp84 - 93) Chris Johnstone refers to addiction as 'stuck patterns of behaviour that can be difficult to change even when we know they are causing harm' he then goes on to explain how following addiction treatment processes can also be applied to help people recover from a lifestyle addiction to oil. Chellis Glendenning (Glendenning, 1995) claims that we (in western society) are in the grips of a 'techno-addiction' and that, in common with other forms of addiction, the symptoms of techno-addiction include 'denial, dishonesty, control, thinking disorders, grandiosity and disconnection from one's feelings'.

There may be many methods of explaining and 'treating' the various issues mentioned above, but one thing stands out to me as an essential ingredient of any possible solution to the causes of these resistances; the need for a positive vision, alternatives that inspire rather than scare, something exciting to work towards rather than feel guilt and shame about.

The Need for Positive Vision

In her 2011 TED lecture entitled 'The World Becomes What You Teach', Zoe Weil described her vision for a new era of education, a 'bigger purpose for schooling', one in which we train the next generation to be 'Solutionaries' Instead of, as is a common educational format in US education, organizing debate teams that compete to win hypothetical arguments, Weil suggests having 'Solutionary teams…competing to find the most viable, ethical, economic solutions to problems' In Weil's vision, our graduates would 'perceive themselves as Solutionaries. They would know that it was their responsibility to ensure their trades and industries were just, humane, peaceful '

I like this vision very much. As a teacher it gives me something to work towards. I believe it describes the essential evolution that our education systems need to make.

In recent years there has been some incredible progressions in Science, Industry, business and economics on 'sustainable solutions'. Innovations known variously as 'cradle to cradle' manufacturing (McDonough, Braungart, 2002) the 'Circular Economy' (www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org), 'Biomimicry' (www.biomimicry.net) and other solutions like these present an inspirational picture of the kind of skills and thought processes that many of our graduates will need to develop for the future career market place.

I believe it is of primary importance to the future of the arts (and indeed, to the needs of our future arts graduates) that we develop the ways in which art education can contribute to a more sustainable society. I am convinced we should be helping our students become more critically aware of sustainability issues, and helping them find

more sustainable ways of creating art and artifacts. Further to this though, I also think we can use the insights we can gain from exploring our resistances to sustainability, as more than potential inspiration for creative expression. Art has always been a way of influencing culture, of transmitting and reflecting new ideas & new forms of consciousness to society. Perhaps creative discourse on the psychological resistances to sustainability that we all experience can contribute?

During the discussions of this paper so far, we have developed a picture of the counter-productive nature of so much sustainability rhetoric (impending disaster, shame and guilt, sofa burning compulsions etc). I hope that the positive visionary examples given above however, portray another view on sustainability; that sustainability practice presents the most fantastic opportunities for creativity, innovation, progressive design, and entrepreneurship. It is up to us as artists and makers to use our various media to spread that vision!

Conclusions

Something to Take Away?

I might seem to have moved away now somewhat from this paper's central theme of using a phenomenological approach in arts teaching, but I do think I have described a variety of ways in which a phenomenological approach can help with exploring all of the above issues with students. I have so far only spoken of this approach in terms of tutoring and mentoring guidance. This is certainly where it is most effective; it is after all, based on psychotherapeutic practices which usually happen between one therapist and one client at a time. Perhaps though, the 'Phenomenological attitude' can be (and often intrinsically is I think) applied in the designing and writing of assignment briefs implicitly in the language, and in the subject matter. Perhaps considering the methodology involved could help tutors deal with diversity in assessment expectations. Perhaps also, we could use this process of developing awareness, and the many aspects of resistance as thematic areas for exploring & critiquing sustainability. Identity, Values, Change, Resistance itself; each of these themes for instance could provide a great way in to discussing the issues that sustainability brings up.

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